

## France

### Report on Global Anti-Semitism

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#### FRANCE

The Government reports that there were 510 anti-Semitic incidents (both actions and threats) in the first 6 months of the year, as compared to 593 for all of 2003 and 932 for 2002. Interior Minister Dominique de Villepin announced in August that there were 160 attacks against persons or property in the first 7 months of 2004 versus 75 during the same period in 2003. More recently, Justice Minister Dominique Perben stated that there were 298 anti-Semitic acts between January 1 and August 20, of which 162 were attacks against property, 67 were assaults against individuals, and 69 were press violations. This compares, according to Perben, with 108 for all of 2003.

The National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (NCCHR) released an extensive analysis of anti-Semitic incidents reported by the police in 2003. Such incidents ranged from graffiti and desecration (256) and verbal or written harassment (166) to the diffusion of written tracts (31) and bomb threats (10). There were 21 persons injured in anti-Semitic attacks in 2003. Based on investigations of the attacks, the NCCHR stated its conclusions that disaffected French-North African youths were responsible for many of the incidents, which French officials linked to tensions in Israel and the Palestinian territories. A small number of incidents were also attributed to extreme-right and extreme-left organizations.

In its report on anti-Semitic attacks in 2003, the NCCHR focused on an increase in the proportion of anti-Semitic incidents that took place in schools. In 2003, 22 of 125 attacks (18 percent) and 73 of 463 threats (16 percent) occurred in schools; the report shows this to be the highest proportion of incidents in schools since 1997, the oldest data in the report.

On May 30, in Boulogne-Billancourt, a 17-year-old Jewish youth was attacked outside his home by a group of young men yelling anti-Semitic slogans. The youth is the son of a local rabbi.

In June, an individual shouting "Allah Akbar" stabbed a Jewish student and assaulted two other Jewish students in the city of Epinay-sur-Seine. This same person is believed to be responsible for similar knife attacks on five other victims, including those of Haitian and Algerian origin. A suspect, reportedly identified by several of the victims, was in custody at the end of the period covered by this report. The varied and random nature of the victims made the true motive of the attacks hard to discern.

In 2003, some Jewish groups were outraged when a court ordered that--in the case of two 11-year-old Muslim youths expelled for accusations of physical and verbal attacks against a Jewish student--the two students be readmitted to school, and also ordered the Government to reimburse the families \$1,340 (1,000 euro) each for court costs. The courts found that, while the

behavior of the Muslim students merited action, the age of the students and the circumstances did not justify expulsion.

On March 23, in Toulon, a Jewish synagogue and community center was set on fire. According to media reports, the arsonist broke a window and threw a Molotov cocktail into the building. There was minor damage and no injuries.

On May 7, in Villier-le-Bel, a small explosive device was discovered outside a synagogue north of Paris. According to media reports, the bomb was in a bag with the writing "Boom anti-Jews" and a swastika. On May 14, an 18-year-old man was found guilty of putting the fake bombs on the grounds of the synagogue and was sentenced to 2 months in prison.

On October 29-30, close to 100 gravestones were desecrated at a Jewish cemetery in Brumath, just outside Strasbourg. The vandals painted swastikas and "SS" symbols on 92 Jewish gravestones.

In November 2003, Hizballah's Al-Manar satellite television channel broadcast an anti-Semitic, Egyptian pseudo-documentary called "Ash Shatat" (The Diaspora). The Government and Jewish organizations strongly criticized Al-Manar for the blatant anti-Semitism of this series and for the incendiary intent of some of Al-Manar's news coverage. These complaints against Al-Manar prompted the Audio Visual Superior Council (CSA) to seek to cut off Al-Manar's dissemination via its France-based satellite operator, Eutelsat. France's highest appeals court for regulatory matters, the Conseil d'Etat, ruled in August that Al-Manar could continue satellite broadcasting pending application for a broadcast license from the CSA. The CSA then entered into negotiations with Al-Manar that resulted in the agreement and temporary license. The CSA signed a 1-year, limited license with Al-Manar on November 19 that included provisions banning anti-Semitic broadcasts, propaganda in favor of suicide bombings, and the diffusion of hate. The CSA's reversal of its decision to cut off Al-Manar was vigorously protested by Jewish organizations. Shortly thereafter, the CSA petitioned the Conseil d'Etat to ban the station based on anti-Semitic programming broadcast after Al-Manar signed the restricted license. On December 13, the Conseil d'Etat ordered Eutelsat to cease broadcasts of Al-Manar within 48 hours. Prime Minister Raffarin has called Al-Manar's anti-Semitic programming "incompatible with French values" and urged the issue of satellite broadcasts be taken up at the EU level. Authorities are similarly investigating Iranian-broadcast Al-Alam channel.

Government officials at the highest level vigorously and publicly condemned acts of anti-Semitism. In October, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs called comments by Radio France International editor Alain Menargues "unacceptable." In an interview publicizing his book on the West Bank security barrier, Menargues called Israel a "racist" state. Menargues was forced to resign as a result of his comments.

Of these anti-Semitic acts committed during the reporting period, the Minister of Justice reported that suspects have been identified in 59 of the cases, resulting in 46 cases going to court and 13 cases closed after the offender paid a fine or was found legally inculpable. Of the 2003 incidents, the Government reported that police had sufficient evidence to question 91 suspects, arrest 69 suspects, and bring to trial 43 suspects. In 2003, there were 7 convictions for anti-Semitic attacks committed that year and 15 convictions for attacks committed in 2002; punishments ranged from fines to 4 years' imprisonment.

Authorities condemned anti-Semitic attacks, maintained heightened security at Jewish institutions, investigated the attacks, made arrests, and pursued prosecutions. More than 13 mobile units, totaling more than 1,200 police officers, were assigned to those locales having the largest Jewish communities. Fixed or mobile police were present in the schools, particularly during the hours when children are entering or leaving school buildings. All of these measures

were coordinated closely with leaders of the Jewish communities in the country, notably the Representative Council of Jewish Institutions in France (CRIF). In addition, the Ministry of Interior has earmarked \$20.1 million (15 million euro) for additional security at Jewish sites.

In November 2003, after an arson attack destroyed a Jewish school in Gagny, President Chirac stated, "An attack on a Jew is an attack on France" and ordered the formation of an interministerial committee charged with leading an effort to combat anti-Semitism. Since its first meeting in December 2003, the committee has worked to improve government coordination in the fight against anti-Semitism, including the timely publication of statistics and reinforced efforts to prosecute attackers.

In June, the Government commissioned Jean-Cristophe Rufin, a doctor, writer, and president of the humanitarian association Action Against Hunger, to prepare an in-depth report on racism and anti-Semitism in the country. The Rufin Report, released in October, concluded that racism and anti-Semitism attacked the country's republican values and threatened democracy. The report identified the perpetrators of anti-Semitic acts as elements of the extreme right, Maghrebian (North African origin) youth, and "disaffected individuals" whose anti-Semitic obsessions prompt their attacks against Jews and Jewish institutions. The Rufin Report also warned against radical anti-Zionists who question Israel's right to exist. The report recommended that a law be created to punish those publicly equating Israel or Zionism with apartheid or Nazism. The report also recommended removing injunctions against incitement to racism and anti-Semitism from the press law and writing a new law, specific to those crimes. The current provisions in the press law are too cumbersome for prosecuting public hate speech and too lenient in their sanctions against private hate speech, it notes.

Many local and international Jewish organizations, as well as foreign governments, praised the Government for vigorous action in combating anti-Semitism; however, some groups asserted that the judicial system was lax in its sentencing of anti-Semitic offenders.

The Government took steps to combat intolerance, particularly among the youth. In March, the Government published an educational tool, intended to help public school teachers promote tolerance and combat anti-Semitism and racism; however, it is still too early to judge its efficacy. In August, Paris Mayor Bertrand Delanoë sent letters to all Paris-area school principals calling for "debates on anti-Semitism, racism and discrimination" when classes resume in September. In addition, the Minister of Education called for a national debate in schools at the beginning of the academic year to highlight the need for tolerance and announced that 5,500 schools would receive copies of the film "Shoah" for use in classroom education. These actions followed the creation of a National Commission to Combat anti-Semitism in schools in 2003.

The Government has taken other proactive steps to fight anti-Semitic attacks, including instructing police commissioners to create monitoring units in each department and announcing in June the creation of a department-level Council of Religions that will raise public awareness of increased racial and anti-sectarian incidents. In September, the Mayor of Paris launched a campaign to fight all forms of intolerance that included 1,200 municipal billboards and bulletins in major newspapers.